

Policing in the ACT

an overview

THE AFP's mission in the ACT is to safeguard the interests of the Government and people of the ACT by the prevention, detection and investigation of crime, the preservation of good order and the protection of life and property.

Policing in the ACT is managed on a district basis with the Territory divided into City District, North District and South District.

City District Station is located on London Circuit in Canberra's central business district. A 'shopfront' station is located in Garema Place, Canberra's largest pedestrian plaza. City District also provides policing to Canberra Airport.

Canberra's inner city precinct, known locally as Civic, has a relatively small residential population but a large commercial, retail, industrial, entertainment, tourist and social centre.

The diverse nature of City District gives rise to an equally diverse range of criminal activities. Of particular concern in recent times have been the number of robberies and assaults in the Civic area. With greater after-hours use of Civic venues in the summer, 'Operation Safer City' was instituted in De-



Officers on patrol in Civic's Garema Place - Canberra Times photo

ember, 1992, where extra police were drawn from non-operational areas to supplement those already walking the beat.

Canberra is also the site of several major festivals and exhibitions throughout the year; each requiring long-term planning.

For two weeks in March, the annual Canberra Festival in Commonwealth Park draws a large

and jubilant crowd. There are 14 events within the festival that require various levels of police attendance. In particular the 'Food and Wine Frolic' requires around 60 officers to maintain a visible but non-intrusive presence while maintaining the peace.

Considerable planning is also required for events such as the Canberra Show, Floriade, Anzac Day, and the Summernats motor show.

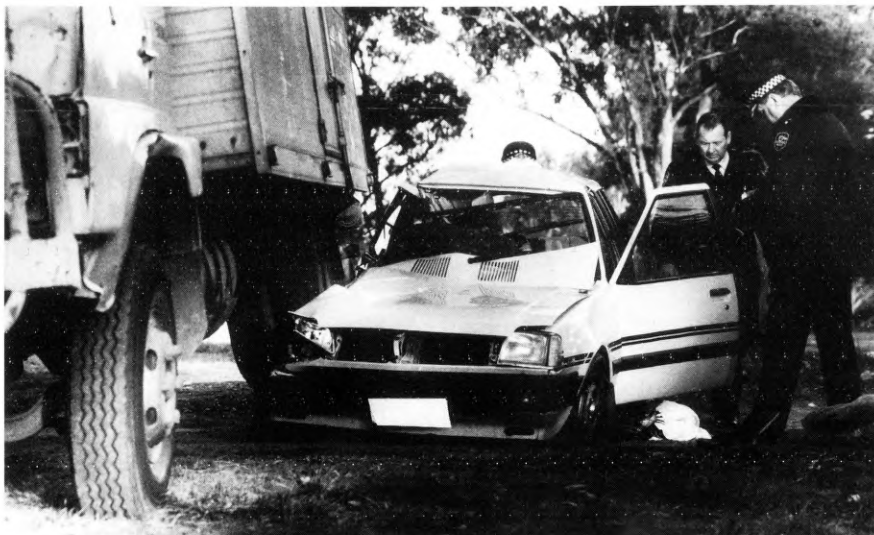
North District

The North District Station is presently located near the Belconnen Town Centre.

Like other Districts, North District members are involved in a range of duties which include vehicle and foot patrols, Neighbourhood Watch, juvenile aid, traffic patrols and the maintenance of a safety education program.

South District

The main South District station is adjacent to Woden's major shopping plaza. A smaller station is located at Erindale Shopping Centre, Wanniasa.



Traffic accidents - a routine part of the job in ACT Region - Canberra Times photo

ACT REGION'S GOAL

To provide a professional police service which works with the ACT Government and community to preserve the peace, reduce the incidence of crime and protect life and property.

South District has established a dedicated bicycle patrol which was the forerunner of patrols now established in the other Districts.

The versatility of bicycles for police work has been proved on numerous occasions such as searches for lost children and surveillance activities. The bicycles provide a ready resource which can be used almost instantly by other units of the AFP.

The ACT Region's Rural Patrol is operated from South District. This patrol liaises with members of the rural community and ACT Government park rangers to help protect property and stock.

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

Fraud

The AFP, through its Fraud Branch, is continually monitoring the ACT motor vehicle industry

and liaises with other police services in the prevention and detection of motor vehicle theft. Motor vehicle theft and trafficking of motor vehicle parts continues to be of concern because of the value of property involved.

A recent initiative in the investigation of general fraud has been the use of computer graphics to enhance the court presentation of complex evidence. Since the adoption of this procedure a number of cases have been successfully prosecuted.

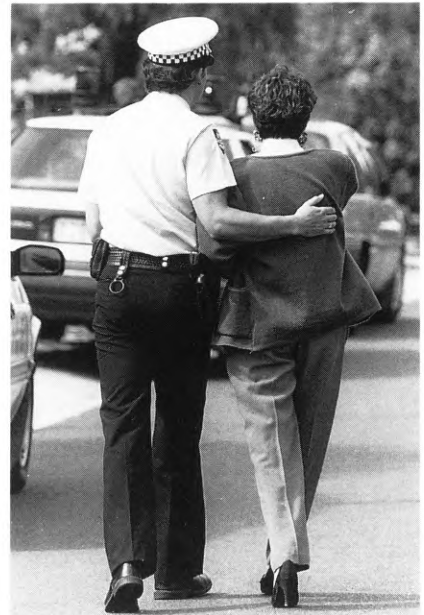
An investigations unit had been established to investigate possible criminal activity relating to proceeds of crime, and matters stemming from the Cash Transactions Report Act 1988, the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act 1987 and the Crimes (Superannuation Benefits) Act 1989.

Drugs

The Drug Operations Branch targets and investigates major drug suppliers and dealers in the ACT. Liaison with AFP regional offices and other law enforcement agencies has had an impact on Canberra's drug trade.

Special Intelligence Branch

As the seat of federal government, the ACT is a primary focus of dissent by special interest groups from around Australia. This, combined with the diplomatic presence



An officer comforts the friend of a traffic accident victim - Canberra Times photo

in Canberra, results in more than 100 public demonstrations each year.

While recognising activists' rights to engage in peaceful protest, it is the job of the Special Intelligence Branch to anticipate potential unlawful activity that may come about during, or as a result of protest activity. Information is collected by SIB members by liaising with special interest groups to ensure that activists' peaceful goals can be met while the demands of law and order are maintained.



Bike patrols of Canberra's parks and cycleways have proved popular with ACT residents - Canberra Times photo

OPERATIONS RESPONSE

Special Operations Team

This team is made up of specially trained officers who spend the majority of their time on regular policing duties.

The team is assembled as necessary to attend incidents where an actual or potential threat of serious physical violence exists or where the use of its tactical skills and specialised equipment has been authorised. It is also responsible for terrorist and hijack containment and resolution.

This is performed in accordance with the National and ACT Anti-Terrorist and Hijack Plans. Hostage negotiation functions are also undertaken.

Bomb Squad

The ACT Region has a well-developed capacity to respond to all bomb-related incidents, including bomb searches and the collection of commercially manufactured explosives. Over 311 bomb-related incidents and tasks were recorded during 1991-92. The Bomb Squad also plays an integral part in the Anti-Terrorist and Hijack Plans.

Water Police

The lakes and waterways within the ACT are patrolled by the Water Police Unit. During the winter months the unit also uses bicycles to patrol the foreshores of the ACT waterways. Most of the incidents attended by the Water Police are associated with assisting small craft and people in distress.

Dog Squad

The Dog Squad provides significant support in searching for offenders in buildings, locating people and property, in rescue and also providing a specialised capability in drug and explosives detection.

Rescue Squad

The Rescue Squad provides a range of services to the ACT community and surrounding districts. The Unit attends incidents involving fires, road accident rescues, industrial accidents and storm damage, while general rescue and recovery tasks are also performed.

Diving Squad

This Squad is responsible for underwater searches and recovery in the ACT. General tasks undertaken include searches for evidence and property, and the location, recovery and freeing of drowned or trapped people.

OPERATIONS SUPPORT

Communications Branch

Effective communications plays a vital and continuous role in the operational support of police within the ACT Region. Radio, telex and facsimile networks are maintained along with a telephone typewriter service which was installed to provide the hearing impaired with an alternate means of communicating with police.

Intelligence

The AFP places great emphasis on the availability of accurate and timely



Police divers on exercise - Canberra Times

criminal and security intelligence. Constant liaison is maintained between regional and district offices, counter-terrorist intelligence agencies and with other security agencies to ensure the most up-to-date information is available. Examples of activities researched and analysed in the ACT include youth gangs, stolen motor vehicles, and armed hold-up offences.

Legal Services

Another important support function maintained within the Region is the provision of sound legal advice as and when it is required. New legislation and amendments to existing statutes have significantly increased demand for this advice.

Initiatives have been taken by the Branch to help shorten police processing time after charges have been laid. These changes should enable offenders to be brought before the courts more expeditiously. The scheme, known as VATAC (Voluntary Agreement to Attend Court) is being trailed in 1992-93 and will be implemented on a permanent basis if proved successful.

Procedures to free police from attending court unnecessarily are also under consideration.

Community Involvement and Liaison

The community is kept informed of



Sergeant Peter Upston displays a few of the weapons surrendered in the ACT arms amnesty which ended in December 1992- Canberra Times photo

police activities through a weekly radio program, press releases and conferences, regular newspaper columns and a weekly television program.

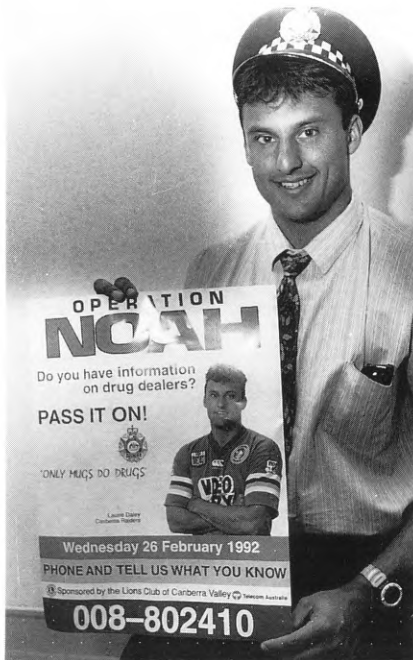
Major community-based activities which gain significant press exposure are Crime Prevention Week, Operation NOAH (drugs) and Operation Paradox (child abuse).

Crime Prevention

Another major community-based activity is Neighbourhood Watch which held its inaugural national conference in Canberra on 10 and 11 May 1992. The Conference was officially launched by the ACT Attorney-General and was attended by representatives of most State and Territory police services. Its purpose was to provide a forum for communication and the exchange of information and ideas at the national level.

'Mobile Watch' is Neighbourhood Watch on the move and was launched in 1992. This program enlists the support of ACT Electricity and Water employees, ACTION bus drivers, Wormalds employees and Real Estate Industry members in reporting suspicious activity.

For the past two years the Schools Program has operated in the Campbell and Kaleen High Schools, along with their feeder primary schools. This program involves a police officer becoming involved in the daily school activities of students and teachers and it continues to receive a favourable response from school staff, students, the police per-



Canberra Raiders' player Laurie Daley was Operation NOAH's 'pin-up' for 1992. Canberra Times photo

forming duty in the schools and from the local community. In addition, each district has a safety education unit whose members routinely visits schools.

Consultation and liaison with community-based organisations continues to be a critical part of the AFP's community policing strategy. Liaison is continuing with Aboriginal, ethnic, and gay groups and with ACT Youth workers.

Youth Clubs

An ongoing community based activity is the Canberra Police & Citizens Youth Club - CPCYC. The

Club has branches in Turner, Narrabundah and Tuggeranong and provides a range of sporting and non-sporting activities for all age groups. During the past year there were in excess of 100,000 attendances.

Traffic

Policing traffic infringements is a District responsibility with Central Traffic Branch co-ordinating territory-wide campaigns.

Operation CAB (Curb the speed, Abstain from alcohol whilst driving and Buckle up), back to school campaigns, random breath testing and snow traffic operations were mounted in 1992 in an effort to improve driver attitudes and reduce death and injury on ACT roads. The CAB campaign was run in partnership with the local taxi industry to encourage people to use taxis, rather than drive themselves after drinking alcohol.

The Central Traffic Branch is responsible for all policing aspects of major events in the ACT. This has included visits to the ACT by the Queen, US President George Bush and other foreign dignitaries.

ADMINISTRATION

Liaison with the ACT Government

The Region maintains an effective working relationship with the ACT Government, by providing detailed advice on various policy issues, operational and administrative matters and constituent inquiries.

In addition to liaison with the ACT Government and its agencies, the Region provides advice, through AFP Headquarters, on police service matters impacting on Commonwealth Government responsibilities.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Finance

The ACT Government has assumed responsibility for funding ACT Community Policing. Previously, full funding was provided by the Commonwealth under the terms of the Policing Arrangement between the two governments.

Human Resources

The Policing Arrangement provides for 706 staff in ACT Region. The apportionment of staff to Commonwealth and ACT functions in 1991-92 was 88 and 618 respectively.



Sergeant Kathy Mowle, Crime Prevention Unit, with cut-outs of Constable Francis Polach which were used by Canberra retailers to remind shoppers of the penalties of shop stealing - Canberra Times photo